

BRIAN HIGGINS
27TH DISTRICT, NEW YORK

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MEASURES
SUBCOMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT

REVITALIZING OLDER CITIES
TASK FORCE
CO-CHAIR

GREAT LAKES TASK FORCE

HOUSE CANCER CAUCUS

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3227

February 26, 2009

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President Barack Obama
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

President Obama,

I was heartened to hear of your commitment to seeking a cure for cancer in our lifetime during your speech to Congress this week and your endorsement of doubling funding for cancer research. I have long argued that finding a cure to cancer should not only be a goal of Congress, it should be America's goal. Many of the breakthroughs and discoveries that have improved the quality of life of those who suffer from cancer are due to efforts by researchers at American institutions. I believe we are morally obligated to carry through the commitment begun since the establishment of the National Cancer Institute more than 70 years ago to eliminate suffering due to cancer in our lifetime.

One of the biggest hurdles of eliminating suffering due to cancer in our lifetime is fully funding our Nation's Cancer Program. Biomedical research at the National Institutes of Health and the National Cancer Institute, screening and early detection programs administered by the Centers for Disease Control, and initiatives involving health care professionals and patients in every community across our country require our full attention. Last year, Rep. Steve Israel and I introduced the National Cancer Fund Act to ensure that a guaranteed stream of federal funds could be devoted toward fulfilling our commitment to these crucial federal priorities that are not always able to be funded through the annual appropriations process. I hope to continue this important conversation on our government's commitment to the Nation's Cancer Program this year.

We both understand the considerable potential that health reform has to address the needs and concerns of millions of cancer patients and their families around the country. Crucial issues like preexisting conditions, lifetime insurance spending caps, physician workforce shortages, and management and survivorship issues for cancer have a particularly acute affect on cancer patients. Creating a better health system in our country will lead to better patient outcomes and will improve the quality of life for patients and their families. I applaud you for making a commitment to health reform, and, as a member of the Ways and Means Committee, I look forward to working with your administration on this critical issue.

Our Nation's Cancer Program also has a significant impact on the economic future of countless areas of our country. In my community in Western New York, the Roswell Park Cancer Institute has long served as a vibrant and innovative economic anchor. Founded in 1898, Roswell Park is one of the oldest health institutions in the world devoted exclusively to cancer and one of the first NCI-designated comprehensive cancer centers in our country. Past discoveries at Roswell Park have included the prostate-specific antigen (PSA) test and future discoveries will lead to the next generation of high quality jobs for Buffalo and the surrounding region. On your first trip to Western New York, I would be honored to host your visit to Roswell Park and the burgeoning Buffalo Niagara Medical Campus – I believe the scope and substance of the tremendous work going on there is worth your personal attention.

With a broad commitment to the War on Cancer, we can improve patient outcomes, lift regional economies, and encourage our next generation of innovators. I appreciate your commitment and I look forward to working with your Administration on this effort as we move forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Brian Higgins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brian" and last name "Higgins" clearly distinguishable.

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress